

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 03306 080817Z  
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EB-08 ISO-00 /020 W  
-----040397 080858Z /21

P R 051700Z MAY 78  
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS  
TO USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY  
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 1013

UNCLAS TUNIS 3306

USDOC FOR BILL CORFITZEN

E. O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: BTRA BEXP TS  
SUBJ: FOREIGN BUYER PROGRAM: TUNISIAN DELEGATION OF HOUSE-  
WARE BUYERS.

REF: (A) IOFAM 316.4 (B) USDOC 8218

1. EMBOFFICERS HARRY MONTGOMERY AND JAMEL BEN MILED CALLED MAY 4 ON MR. TAOUIK KAROU, PRESIDENT OF TUNISIAN TRADE OFFICE, OFFICE DU COMMERCE DE LA TUNISIE (OCT), AND MR. MOHAMED HATTAB DABBECH, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF OCT AND DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE SOCIETE DES MAGASINS MODERNES (CHAIR OF DEPARTMENT STORES) TO DISCUSS MAY VISIT OF TUNISIAN BUYERS TO US. MEETING REINFORCED EMBASSY VIEW THAT FORTHCOMING VISIT TO US PROVIDES EXCEPTIONALLY VALUABLE OPPORTUNITY TO GAIN Foothold FOR US CONSUMER GOODS IN TUNISIAN MARKET AND TO START TO BREAK HOLD THAT TRADITIONAL FRENCH CONNECTIONS HAVE ON SUPPLYING RETAIL TRADE HERE.

2. MR. KAROU SAID HIS OFFICE IS ORGANIZING AND PROMOTING VISIT TO THE US TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITY OF IMPORTING NON-LUXURY CURRENT HOUSEWARE ITEMS, (LISTED INDICATIVELY IN REFTTEL), WHICH OCT WILL MAKE AVAILABLE  
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TO MAGASIN GENERAL -- WITH WHICH EMBASSY HAD A SUCCESSFUL IN-STORE PROMOTION PROGRAM, TO MONOPRIX AND TO OTHER DEPARTMENT STORES IN VARIOUS CITIES. EARLY DELIVERY, APPARENTLY FOR SUMMER SALE, IS DESIRED. KAROU SAID MAGASIN GENERAL'S EXPERIENCE HAD SHOWN THAT US PRODUCTS ARE POPULAR BECAUSE OF GOOD QUALITY, PLEASANT PRESENTATION AND, MOST IMPORTANT FOR

TUNISIANS, LOWER PRICED THAN SIMILAR EUROPEAN PRODUCTS. THIS HAS ENCOURAGED TUNISIANS TO IMPORT MORE US PRODUCTS. HE NOTED ALSO THAT RECENT GOT TENDENCY TO DIVERSIFY SOURCES OF SUPPLY, AND REDUCE TRADE DEFICIT WITH FRANCE IN PARTICULAR, HELPED STIMULATE OCT TO LOOK TOWARDS UNITED STATES AS A SOURCE OF SUPPLY. HE ADDED THAT HIS WAS FIRST RECONNAISSANCE VISIT OF ITS KIND OF OCT; HE TENDED TO MINIMIZE DUTY/TAX BURDEN OF SORT OF USEFUL GOODS CONTEMPLATED FOR IMPORTATION.

3. GROUP TO VISIT US IS COMPOSED OF FOLLOWING THREE INDIVIDUALS: MR. MOHAMED HATTAB DABBECH, ITTGIGLL BE GROUP DIRECTOR; MR. HAMADI KOOLI, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF MAGASIN GENERAL; AND MR. ABDELHAMID ACHOUR, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF MONOPRIX. THE LATTER TWO SPEAK ENGLISH FLUENTLY, WHILE MR. DEBBECH'S ENGLISH IS WEAK.  
(FYI: AS 1977-78 PRESIDENT OF TUNIS JAYCEES, ACHOUR HAS HAD WIDE AMERICAN CONTACTS.)

4. VISIT (MAY 10-20) IS SUBJECT TO CONFIRMATION BY TUNISIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON. MAY 11 BRIEFING AT TUNISIAN EMBASSY: MAY 12 BRIEFING IN COMMERCE: WEEK-END TRAVEL TO CHICAGO: MONDAY-TUESDAY MAY 15-16 VISIT CHICAGO MART.: WEDNESDAY TRAVEL TO NEW YORK: THURSDAY-FRIDAY VISIT NEW YORK MART; SATURDAY, MAY 20 RETURN TO TUNISIA.

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5. BUYING POWER AND RETAIL SALES IMPACT OF OCT AND CHAIR STORES JOINING IT IN RECONNAISSANCE OF US SUPPLIERS IS UNRIVALLED IN TUNISIA. PARTICULARLY FELICITOUS ASPECT OF ARRANGEMENT IS THAT OCT, AS GOVERNMENT AGENCY, WILL HAVE NO DIFFICULTY OBTAINING NECESSARY IMPORT LICENSES. MR. KAROUI COULD NOT SPECIFY, AT THIS POINT, AMOUNT OF PURCHASES BUT HE SAID THEY WILL BE SUBSTANTIAL. WE HAVE AGREED TO MEET WITH ALL GROUP MEMBERS AFTER THEIR RETURN FROM US TO LEARN THEIR IMPRESSIONS, GET AN IDEA WHAT AND HOW MUCH THEY WILL PURCHASE IN THE US, AND DETERMINE FOLLOW-ON ACTION.

5. DEPENDING ON HOW MAY VISIT GOES, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT KAROUI AND MR. FERID MOKHTAR, PRESIDENT OF MAGASIN GENERAL, WILL ATTEND THE NATIONAL HOUSEWARES SHOW IN JULY IN CHICAGO. WE WILL TELEGRAPH USDOC WHEN TRAVEL PLANS ARE COMPLETE.

6. GIVEN SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY AFFORDED BY THIS BUYERS DELEGATION -- POTENTIALLY GOING WELL BEYOND ON-TIME SALES OF HOUSEWARES -- WE WILL APPRECIATE ALL YOU CAN DO TO MAKE VISIT A SUCCESS.

MULCAHY

NOTE BY OC/T: TELEGRAM DELAYED IN TRANSMISSION.

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## Message Attributes

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